

# WHAT'S *New*

in the Metropolitan Police Department



*A weekly update for residents, visitors,  
and workers in the District of Columbia*

*Friday, September 26, 2003*

## MPDC, OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT TO BLANKET DC AREA WITH SOBRIETY CHECKPOINTS AND PATROLS

Law enforcement agencies throughout the DC metropolitan area are stepping up the fight against motorists who drink and drive. Between now and January 4, 2004, DC, Maryland and Virginia law enforcement agencies will conduct widespread sobriety checkpoints and patrols every week to deter motorists from driving under the influence and to identify and arrest those who get behind the wheel even though they are impaired. The sobriety checkpoints are part of Checkpoint Strikeforce, which couples a public awareness radio campaign with zero tolerance law enforcement to reduce the number of impaired drivers in the Washington area. The MPDC kicked off the campaign with a "happy hour" sobriety checkpoint in Northwest DC on Friday evening. In support of Checkpoint Strikeforce, the Washington Regional Alcohol Program has developed a \$170,000 media campaign, anchored by three radio spots that target the highest risk demographic group of males ages 21 to 34. Sobriety checkpoints are among law enforcement's most effective anti-drunk driving tools because they are used at times and locations where drunk driving is most likely to occur. Studies show that sobriety checkpoints can reduce alcohol-related crashes by as much as 20 percent.

## RESIDENTS WARNED ABOUT FRAUD AND SCAMS IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE ISABEL

The damage caused by natural disasters such as last week's Hurricane Isabel can often bring out the best in people, as strangers reach out to help others in need. Unfortunately, the aftermath of a crisis also brings out persons who take advantage of those who have already been victimized. Some of the most common "after-disaster" scams involve home repairs, clean-up efforts, heating and cooling equipment, and flood-damaged cars. The Better Business Bureau and DC Department of Insurance and Securities Regulation offer a number of important tips for consumers who have suffered damage as a result of Isabel. First, contact your insurance agent right away and ask for instructions on what to do. Make a list and take pictures of your personal property that has been damaged or destroyed. Do not have permanent repairs made until your insurance company has inspected the property and you have reached an agreement on the cost of repairs. Although you may be anxious to get things back to normal, avoid acting in haste. Don't be pressured into signing a long-term contract; make temporary repairs if necessary. For major permanent repairs, take time to shop around for contractors, get competitive bids, check out references, and get a report from the BBB. Be wary of door-to-door workers who claim your home is unsafe. If you are concerned about possible structural damage in your home, have an engineer, architect, or building official inspect it. Prepare a written agreement with anyone you hire. It should delineate the work to be done, the materials to be used, and the price breakdown for both labor and materials. Review it carefully before signing. Never pay for all repairs in advance (a down payment of one-third is standard), and don't pay cash. And provide these safety tips to relatives and neighbors who are senior citizens, as they are frequently targets of home repair and other frauds.

① Read more about Checkpoint Strikeforce at:  
<http://mpdc.dc.gov/news/news.asp?sid=2334>

① Learn more about the Checkpoint Strikeforce media campaign at:  
<http://www.wrap.org/checkpoint.html>

① DC has some of the toughest drunk driving laws, including a .08 BAC standard. Get the details at:  
<http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/traffic/duihome.shtml>

① For consumer information from the DC DISR, go to:  
[http://disr.dc.gov/news\\_room/2003/september/09\\_17\\_03.shtml](http://disr.dc.gov/news_room/2003/september/09_17_03.shtml)

① For a list of "red flags" from the Better Business Bureau – including links for getting a BBB report on a contractor and filing an online complaint – click on:  
<http://www.bbb.org/disaster/redflags.asp>

① People who have been the victim of a home repair or other fraud are often too embarrassed to file a police report. But to identify and prosecute these criminals, the MPDC needs victims to come forward. Victims can call the MPDC's Financial Crimes and Fraud Unit at (202) 727-4159.

① The MPDC Harbor Patrol Branch was damaged by Isabel, so the unit has temporarily relocated to a trailer near its headquarters at 550 Water Street, SW. Details at:  
<http://mpdc.dc.gov/blue/news.asp?sid=2329>

## REGIONAL ARSON TASK FORCE RELEASES SKETCH OF POSSIBLE SUSPECT, ISSUES STATEMENT TO SUSPECT

Earlier this month, the regional task force investigating a series of arson fires in DC and Prince George's County issued a sketch of an individual seen leaving the scene of an apparent attempted arson on Anacostia Road in Northeast DC. The individual is described as a light-complexioned black male, with a medium build and salt-and-pepper hair cropped back. That same day, the task force issued a statement directly to the arsonist responsible for these fires. "From our understanding of individuals involved in this type of behavior, we know they often desire to communicate a message to society at large. We want this person to know that we are a willing audience for that message," the statement read. "The Task Force would like the person responsible for these fires to contact us, either through our phone tip line, our post office box, or email address."

## DPW IMPLEMENTS ONLINE TOWED VEHICLE LOCATOR

If you believe your vehicle has been towed in DC, the Department of Public Works has a new resource to help you locate it. It's the online Towed Vehicle Locator on the DPW website. Individuals can enter their tag number or VIN (Vehicle Identification) into the system, and it will provide information on when the vehicle was towed and where it is located. The Towed Vehicle Locator is one of many towing reforms being implemented by a multi-agency task force that includes DPW, the MPDC and the Department of Motor Vehicles. Note that if your vehicle has been towed for unpaid parking tickets or another parking violation, all fines, boot and/or tow fees must first be paid at the DMV's Adjudication Office at 65 K Street, NE. If parking tickets remain unpaid after a vehicle has been booted, the vehicle is towed from the street to the District's Impoundment Lot on 4800 Addison Road in Beaver Heights, MD.

## NEWS & NOTES

**Mayor's Latino Cultural Fair and Town Hall Meeting.** This event, postponed because of Hurricane Isabel, has been rescheduled for Monday, September 29, from 5-8:30 pm at Cardozo High School. For details call (202) 671-2825.

**Ward 1 Merchant Workshop.** A workshop focusing on public and business safety, as well as other business issues, will be held for merchants in Ward 1 on Tuesday, September 30, from 2-4 pm, at the MPDC's Third District station. Details at 727-3120.

**Citizen Summit III.** Residents are reminded to join Mayor Williams and other DC leaders for Citizen Summit III, on Saturday, November 1, from 8 am - 4 pm at the new Washington Convention Center. Details and online registration are available at: <http://citizensummit.dc.gov/main.shtm>

**Overnight Photo Radar Hours.** DC motorists are reminded that the MPDC is deploying photo radar speeding reduction cameras during the overnight hours. Beginning this month, this shift has been expanded to include a full, eight-hour deployment from 10 pm to 6 am, six nights a week. Details on photo radar at: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/traffic/speed.shtm>

**Drug Free Zones.** Drug free zones are in effect this weekend in four police districts, with additional zones planned for next weekend. Details on the Anti-Loitering/Drug Free Zone law are at: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/comm/drugfreezone.shtm>

① For updates on the arson investigation – including the suspect's sketch, the task force's statement and information on how to contact the task force – visit: <http://www.goprincegeorgescounty.com/Government/PublicSafety/Fire/arson.asp?h=20&s=60&n=40&n1=30>

① To access the online Towed Vehicle Locator, click on: <http://dpw.dc.gov/services/towing/locator.asp>

① More information about vehicle towing and impoundment is available at: [http://dpw.dc.gov/services/tow\\_impound.shtml](http://dpw.dc.gov/services/tow_impound.shtml)

### DATA BOX

#### Homicides (as of 9/26/03)

- 2003: 184
- 2002: 176
- % Change: +4.5%

#### Arrests, Adult Suspects (week ending 9/20/03)

- Total: 763
- Drugs: 96
- Motor Vehicle Theft: 22
- Prostitution/Sex Offenses: 35

#### Firearm Recoveries (as of 9/23/03)

- Total: 1,422
- September: 11

#### Traffic Fatalities (as of 9/26/03)

- 2003: 53
- 2002: 42
- % Change: +26.2%

Information, ideas, or comments about this service? Send an e-mail to **KEVIN MORISON**, MPDC's Director of Corporate Communications, at [kevin.morison@dc.gov](mailto:kevin.morison@dc.gov). Would you like to have this information e-mailed to you? Just go to our Website and register with **Crimereports.com**.

**mpdc.dc.gov**